



At UNM–Taos, we are committed to preparing the workforce that protects and sustains our most vital resources—our water, our land, and our air. We do this in many ways:

**Natural Resource Management Degree:** We offer a transfer degree in Natural Resource Management that equips students to steward northern New Mexico’s unique ecosystems and to continue their studies at Highlands University. Our graduates are rooted in this land and prepared for meaningful careers that sustain both community and environment.

**Sustainability and Conservation:** UNM–Taos is proud to be a certified Bee Campus USA, reflecting our commitment to pollinator health and environmental stewardship. We are also developing programming in sustainable agriculture, building on our region’s traditions while preparing students for emerging careers in food and land systems. Our accessible trails—used daily by the public—were made possible through Trails+ New Mexico grants, and they serve as a living example of how education, community health, and conservation come together on this campus.

**Water Operator Training:** We partner with the Rural Community Assistance Corporation and have supported the formation of the Greater Valle de Taos Water and Wastewater Alliance. Recently, we applied for GRO funds to support water operators. The **New Mexico Grow (GRO) Fund** is a state workforce initiative that provides free or low-cost training for high-demand careers across the state. Supported by legislative funding, it covers tuition and related costs so that New Mexicans—especially in rural areas—can access the skills needed for good jobs. Renewal of this fund is essential to keep training opportunities affordable and accessible. Thanks to these funds, we will provide certified training in all levels of small water, water I–IV, and wastewater I–IV. We are very proud that this training will be free to operators and available locally, meeting the needs of rural systems that keep our communities running.

**Energy and Resilience Workforce:** Looking ahead to your discussions on microgrids, wildfire mitigation, and resilience, UNM–Taos is working hand in hand with Kit Carson Electric Cooperative to develop curriculum, programs, and apprenticeships for the clean energy workforce. The GRO Fund has already helped us prepare CDL drivers and fiber technicians, and we are now expanding into training for the microgrid workforce, which is critical to wildfire protection in New Mexico’s forests.

**GRO Fund Support:** These efforts are supported by the New Mexico Grow Fund, a workforce initiative that has already enabled thousands of New Mexicans to access free or low-cost training in high-demand fields. Renewal of the GRO Fund is essential, and your committee’s support will ensure that rural communities across the state continue to benefit.

These initiatives align closely with the important topics before you today—from pollinator protection and land conservation to acequia resilience, wildfire mitigation, and water security planning. They reflect our mission as a rural-serving institution: to meet local needs while contributing to statewide solutions. Thank you for your time, for your advocacy, and for your commitment to sustaining New Mexico’s most precious resources.